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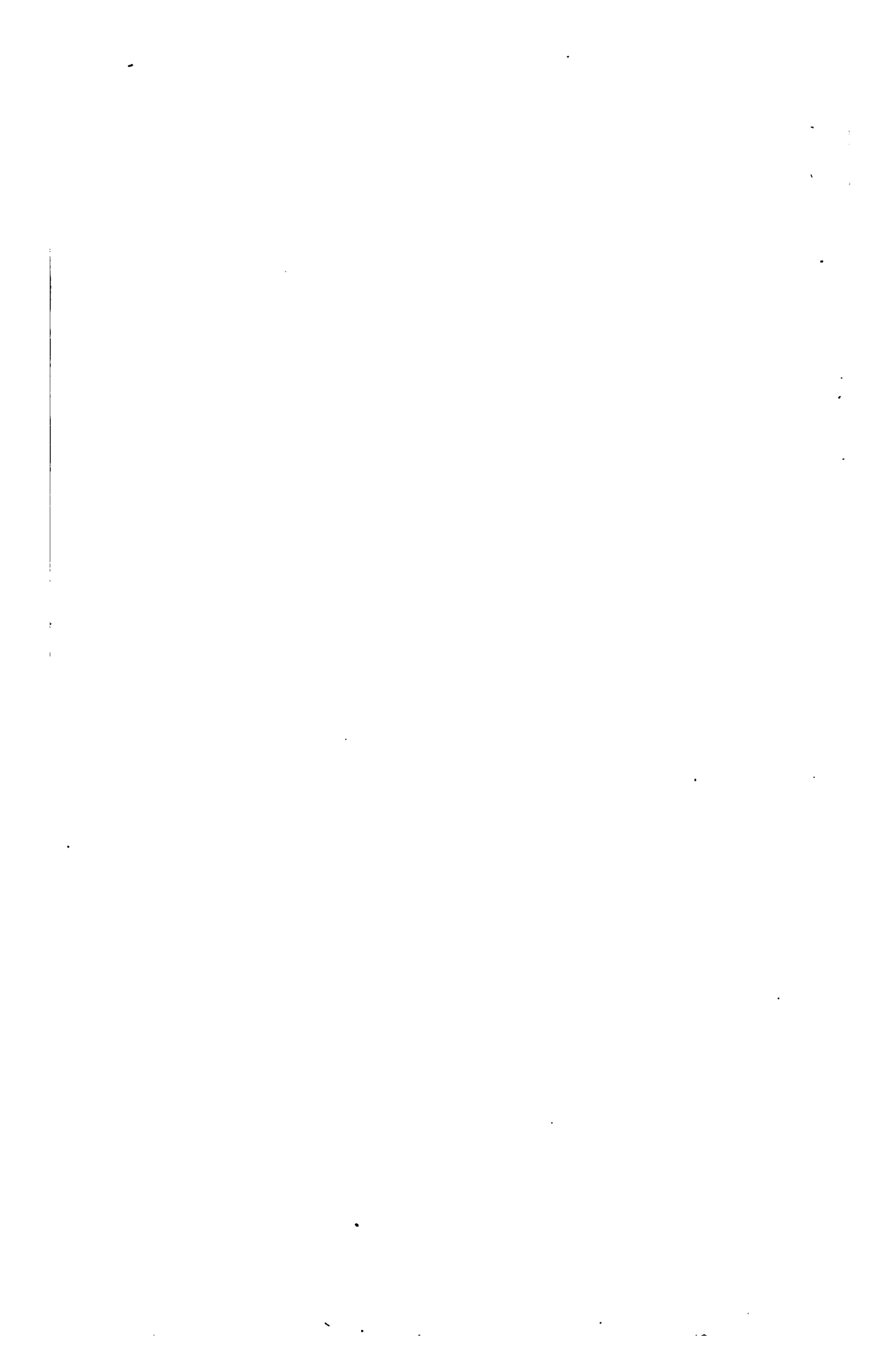


















**BRUNELLESCHI**



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# BRUNELLESCHI

A POEM

BY

JOHN GALEN HOWARD

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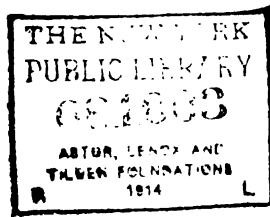
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*Within the sixty-nine years of Filippo Brunelleschi's life, Italy passed from the Dark Ages to the Renaissance. More than three-quarters of a century before the great architect was born his most famous work, the cathedral dome of Santa Maria del Fiore, had been foreshadowed by Arnolfo di Cambio, the original architect of the building; but though the cathedral had, by Brunelleschi's time, been mostly finished otherwise, the vast octagonal space over the crossing still remained without a roof, for lack of an architect with the skill and courage to formulate a plan and carry out the task. These and other necessary qualities Brunelleschi alone possessed. Actual construction was begun by him twenty-six years before his death, but he was fated to see completed only the main portion of the dome. The crowning lantern was finished in accordance with his design, years after he was gone, by Michelozzo, once (and always) his pupil, later his rival, and finally his successor.*

*The action of the piece occupies one fine April day, a brief interval of vigor in Brunelleschi's last illness. The aged architect, realizing that death is at hand, has determined upon a last visit to the dome. The first scene is at dawn, in Brunelleschi's room at the top of his house in Florence, near the cathedral, which is to be seen through the open window. The second scene is at mid-day within and on the dome. The third scene is at sunset on the slopes of San Miniato overlooking Florence, with the dome in the middle distance. Throughout the piece Brunelleschi alone speaks.*



*To climb the summit of the centuries  
And orb their life in skiey stone!*



# BRUNELLESCHI

## PART I—MORNING

TIME: *April, 1446. Daybreak.*

SCENE: *An upper room, Florence. The Dome is seen beyond.*

PERSONS: *Filippo Brunelleschi and his adopted son, Andrea. Brunelleschi speaks.*

AT LAST!—Now Dawn hath like a serpent slipt  
Her shroud of murk oblivion and glides  
Fresh-panoplied with jewels forth from night!  
Awake, Andrea! For today once more,  
5 After these bedrid æons, would my feet  
The sky-bound platform of my Dome achieved  
Enjoy. Upon this day will I go up  
Into that mountain for a last farewell!

Withdraw the hangings, that I well may see  
10 From this dim corner, framed with chambered gloom's  
Delicious flood of ambient morning air,  
My blossom-bubble of frail fabric sheen,  
Atingle with the day, still sweet with dew  
And rosy thro' dawn's pearl. More fully draw

## BRUNELLESCHI

15 The grapy damask from the pouring rays  
Until its glinting dragons drown in dregs  
And these used eyes, antiqued with Roman wont,  
Joy in divine proportion.

So! Such forms

20 As I have builded should be ever seen—  
Unless it be beneath the frameless vault  
Of circumambient ensconcing skies—  
As now thro' archèd oblongs exquisite.

Perfection! 'Tis a beauty such, methinks,

25 As none but he who made can utterly  
Delight in! Ha! Arnolfo, how would you  
Lift eyes in prayer could you but see this heaven  
I've crowned your space withal! Could you forgive,  
In jealousy for thine own striving hand,

30 My bettering your best? As well as I  
Forgive your crouching Atlas that his brawn  
Reeks not of facture mine, each toiling stone  
Bone of my bone, and toil of my long toil,  
To hold my heavens up to Majesty!

35 Vain for the God-in-us to crave the all—  
Not to derive, or flash like glinting beads  
On whirlwind skirts of cataracts of power,  
But in imperious oneness to ordain



## MORNING

And to suffice! Vain, for at very best  
40 We wilful makers are but shreds and waifs  
Of urgent godhead, and our mightiest throes  
Of will creative are but gentlest breaths  
Out of almighty nostrils. Yet meseems—  
And thus I justify my headiness—  
45 God maketh best by human instruments,  
Thro' secondary act of primal power.  
Nor seas nor mounts nor all His wheeling hosts  
Outweigh perchance the breath from poets' lips,  
Or radiance elusive of the light  
50 That quicks dead walls touched deathless by the brush;  
How, then, with domes that span with winged stones,  
Wrought to live purpose by mere act of mind,  
Void space above Christ's holy shrine? Naught greater  
God hath created than my blushing Dome,  
55 The virgin breast of Florence! There hath art  
Touched the high term of beauty. 'Tis of God,  
Solely of God. He thro' my tangled brain  
Conceived and did; nor thro' my brain alone  
But thro' the countless minds whose heritage  
60 Mine hath but garnered, and their teeming house  
Set now at last in order. Most of all  
From him (high heart) my fountains take their rise  
Who first laid down the pregnant octagon,

## BRUNELLESCHI

And visioned it o'erswept and glorious  
65 With wingèd earth-stuff rapturously enskied.

Timid that profile as it budded first  
Within his mind's of-God-impregnate womb?  
"Timid and paltry" were the words I used  
To hammer home a truth they would not heed,  
70 Those close *maestri*, with their padlockt heads  
Nodding and knocking woodenly of rules  
And precedent, and of the high respect  
Due to Arnolfo's sacred memory.

But which is he who most respects the law—  
75 He whom the letter circumscribes and kills,  
Or he within whose soul law's soul strikes root,  
Bursting the bonds of its enjailing shell  
To amplify forever? Words I used  
In heat to clench a white-hot argument  
80 I used with purpose underneath my heat,  
With cold and tempered purpose, for those words—  
Those hateful words—applied not to the thought  
Arnolfo sowed, a seed of the sublime,  
But to the minds that saw sublimity  
85 Curtailed and wingless, and were satisfied.  
I spake Arnolfo, and my words drove home.  
I markt the wincing eyelash and the flinch

## MORNING

Of the touched raw; and "Florence with a dome  
Timid and paltry! Inconceivable  
90 And not to be endured!" they each and all  
Trode toe on heel in protest.

So my point  
And the first glory of the Dome were won.  
For 'tis alone by that uplifting wall  
95 The form voluptuous above gets wings  
For soaring free to empyreal power.  
So is Arnolfo's thought empedestaled,  
Rapt from closed budhood and out-flowered in joy  
Amid the blue, unhampered unaware,  
100 Its will achieved, its yearning in repose.  
'Tis so forever in the life of thought;  
Expression goes not home, knows not its ends,  
If it be not detachd, distinguishd, throned,  
Set high apart and sacredly enshrined.  
105 'Twas so our Florentine his Comedy  
Put at awe's distance by the awesome form  
Wherewith he clothed his vision's universe,  
And, by removing, brought his vision home,  
A universal knock at each heart's door.  
110 Only a few can cluster round a spring  
Hid among sedges secretly and shy;  
But hang its gauzy gladness o'er the cliff

## BRUNELLESCHI

And each who looks may mark it for his own.  
Lift thou thy thought into the upper air  
115 If thou wouldst speak beyond the reach of death!

So bloomed Arnolfo's buddings at my hands.  
Him hail I grandsire; thro' these clogging veins  
Still riot gladsome drops I owe to him,  
When I but think upon him. 'Twas a man,  
120 God's image manned with God's first attribute—  
The potent will creative—that conceived  
Yon form of loveliness, and dared its plan.  
From him most I derive, and have a pride  
To flow from such a source; 'tis but the mood  
125 That marks me maker when I jealous am  
Of aught that seems to minish mine own strength  
Or to condition its forth-putting. Now,  
When my last journey I must soon take up  
(Who knoweth to what bourn?) and all alone,  
130 As never yet I journeyed, let these words,  
As if they were my latest breath, sink deep  
Into thy heart of hearts, beloved son—  
Heart of my heart, tho' wanting blood of mine—  
More closer for my loving, not my lust.  
135 I, whom my Florence placeth up, alone,  
At last after these fifty years of fight,

## MORNING

Owe all I am to my progenitors,  
Not of the flesh alone—nay, surely—but  
To those now nameless dead whose godlike stuff  
140 Of the imagination ever fed  
And feeds my inmost being. He who gave  
His gift in but a breath of living thought—  
Caught from the whisper of a passing Power,  
Misunderstood or haply misapplied,  
145 But quick—hath given that without which I  
Had languisht or gone down. In reverence  
For the unending sacred stream of life  
Which is but God, I pass my portion on  
To him who follows after. May my thought  
150 Be fruitful and increase in many minds  
Yet to be born in lands beyond my ken.  
Haply there shall arise on crest of time  
Some spirit—nay, some spirits—packt with power,  
Who, building on my thought, shall raise up piles  
155 More mighty than my mightiest, yet give  
To me the guerdon of their deeds divine.  
So is my meed most his who went before.

Ev'n as I speak, see how the April sun,  
Fresh from his dip in nightly Lethe, springs  
160 Fleet-footed from the hills, his earliest glance

## BRUNELLESCHI

Kindling the snowy topping of the Dome,  
Unfinisht yet and webbed with scantling gold  
That, lacelike, masks the inward loveliness.  
Now slide the rays adown the swelling mound—

165 A lover's touch that swift with young desire  
Caresses and compels voluptuous form.  
From out the dusk of dawning, sweet emerge  
Chaste raptures of pale marble, veining soft  
The roseleaf-luscious languor of that hill  
170 All virginal. And now the eager light  
Hath like a lover swept the immaculate  
And taken all . . . as Christ, our light of lights  
And days' eternal day, would sweep to Him  
The budding ripeness of His mystic bride.

175 'Tis time I left this palsied pallet. Now,  
And for the last time—oh! I feel it snap  
My fragile heart-strings—shall I mount that height  
Whereto my life hath been pledged utterly.  
No more with pride imperial shall I set  
180 These feet upon the rung to the sky's gates,  
Nor o'er these lips may ever burst again  
The voice of fiat; but a suppliant,  
Kneeling the steps of Christward penitence,  
I will up-crawl, a worm before the Throne.

## MORNING

185 Even to rise from this strait couch I need  
Thy arm, Andrea; and thy filial word—  
'Tis strange how deep its sound doth penetrate  
And how it easeth me. When I am gone  
'Tis thou I would have make my monument;  
190 'Tis so perchance thou hast a chance to live.  
Nay, be not vext; we be no flatterers,  
To scum salt hearts with sweetness, thou and I.  
What I to thee, say thou unto the world;  
What I of thee, say thou of me abroad,  
195 Nor paint me beauteous; but as thou hast seen,  
So show me forth. It is one half my pride  
That I have won, being but what I am,  
A pint-pot scrub, so full of cranky whims  
And desperate abridgments that all maids  
200 Have said me nay, till, in the lapse of time,  
My heart hath turned unto the like of thee,  
And made me father all vagaries thine.  
It were quaint justice, shouldst thou live thro' me  
In thy presentment, since thou lack'st my blood  
205 Yet call'st me father. Make my monument!

And while thou help'st me to put on these stuffs  
More joyous for the sackcloth of my soul  
(Which men must spy not) I'll beguile the hour

## BRUNELLESCHI

With memories; for I have never told  
210 Even to thee one half the struggles deep  
Wherethro' I've waded to this shore of years.  
Nor shall I now, nor could I; yet, in part,  
Since thou must make me live when I am dead,  
'Tis fitting thou shouldst glimpse my battle-field  
215 Before we knew ourselves as son and sire  
In the calm evening of my agony,  
That smoothed the pathways of thy morning life.

Thou know'st my model for Lorenzo's doors;  
Thou know'st my model for yon soaring Dome;  
220 Betwixt those two there yawned a score of years  
Empty of all achievement visible  
But packt with gnawing hell. I knew my power,  
For it was very I—I breathed and drank,  
Waked, slept and lived it. In my deepest soul  
225 There was no cranny but was crank with it.  
And in my mind imagination still  
And sleeplessly did live with gaping space  
O'ercrowned and perfected. An instinct 't was,  
More not-to-be-denied than roused lust—  
230 A lust indeed instinctive and more hot,  
More exigent, than fleshly longings—that  
With a consuming summons called me on



## MORNING

To close vast spaces in. 'T was born in me  
As hunger in all creatures, nor less fierce.

235 But I recall, as men recall first love,  
The hour when first in fire from out the blue  
The bolt of conscious will to live or die  
For that desire—to make it good—smote thro'  
To gushing springs of being.

240 But a lad,  
A mean, frail shred of boyhood, was I then—  
Ten years or suchlike. All the town was mad  
With joy and with acclaim that Giotto's tower,  
That half a century was building, was topt out.

245 And I, with other urchins, half a score—  
Lorenzo one of them of course—slipt by  
The jealous wardens and made holiday  
All up the dizzy wonder to the roof.  
Once there, the keeper panting in pursuit,

250 We rompt around the hanging parapet  
In shrillest glee, with taunts scarce circumspect  
For him who followed fast; till finally  
He herded all save but Lorenzo's self  
And me down thro' the scuttle. We escaped

255 That ignominy by a sudden dodge  
And found ourselves alone in the pale blue.

## BRUNELLESCHI

We both had kindled with the kindled town,  
And in our hearts there throbbed a riot joy  
That Giotto's genius now was culminate  
260 Full two score years since he was in his grave.  
The people's exaltation scarce was less  
Than when not long ago we capt the Dome;  
And we small slips of callow artistry  
Were fired with sense of genius. Scarcely friends  
265 Were we, even as children—too unlike  
Our natures were to coalesce in love;  
But we were friendly till that tower-top hour.  
There our ways parted. And they never since  
Have met but they have crost.  
270 From that great height  
We lookt together o'er the bristling town,  
Sawed with the holds of lordlings, and in pride  
Each told upon his fingers each proud house  
He held allegiance unto. Hardly once  
275 My score agreed with his. My friends and his  
Might have inhabited two separate worlds,  
So far apart our standards and our kin.  
Boys take these things more seriously than men,  
Even in Florence, and incipient heat  
280 Burned in each reddening cheek, despisal's flag.  
It was when we had warmed to boast and taunt,

## MORNING

Boy-fashion, that we wheeled and o'er the church  
Alongside bent our downward gaze. At odds  
In family allegiance, more at odds  
285 We were, and came to fisticuffs, thereon.  
To me the yawning chasm, that markt the dome  
Arnolfo had imagined, was a lure,  
A challenge, a delight; to him a snare,  
A fearsome bungle—worse, disaster sure,  
290 If it indeed with stone must be o'erspanned.  
Then sprang my fate to saddle and I cried,  
“'Tis cowardice to drivel such a lie!  
Think you Arnolfo knew not what he did  
When hé foresaw that gaping hole? I know  
295 It can be vaulted, and I'll do it, too!”

'T was sixty years ago, well nigh; yet now  
I still can feel my cheek grow hot and cold  
With that unreasoned and divine control  
Which hath sustained me ever, but first then  
300 Made manifest my business. 'T was Christ's will  
That I should heal that emptiness! And when,  
In after time, the years dragged on and on,  
Defeat succeeding failure, and naught moved  
That cumbersome machine the *Opera*—  
305 Or, moved, they did but jangle their minds' chains,

## BRUNELLESCHI

Creakt dry old catchless cogs, and spat out dust—  
I oft have cast me on my bended knees  
And sought new guidance; and as oft His hand  
Have felt uplift me till my doubt was done.

310 But this was later—boys have little care  
But that their wills will carry; as for me,  
As boy I never doubted. My first doubt  
Came at same hand as my first certainty—  
Lorenzo's—but not doubt anent the Dome,  
315 Nor doubt so much about myself as him.  
When he and I lockt horns over the bronze  
That was to seal the doorless baptistry,  
Then first I saw him as a power. Till then,  
All thro' our prentice days, I'd thought of him  
320 As but a plodding potterer, a fond  
And fearful searcher-out of vanities  
Who never knew his mind, and took the world  
Into his confidence to fix him one.  
But when the models for the gates were shown,  
325 Our two—Lorenzo's and my own—stood out  
Together, peers incomparable; so  
The town and all did say. And some inclined,  
And not a few, to mine. But in my heart  
I knew that his was finer, and with pain

## MORNING

330 I marveled wherefore. How could such a mind,  
So feeble in conception, indirect,  
And blown about by every gust that came,  
Produce a thing so exquisite? It balkt  
My being. And 'twas from that hour I knew  
335 Not force can work the marvel but the long  
Inveterate travail of the soul. I saw  
My Abraham a pattern of myself—  
Hot to the deed, e'en odious. Odious thought,  
To minds like mine, that they must clip will's wings  
340 To plod in patience the long paths to power,  
And know the bloody scourging of defeat,  
Ere they may make the mile-stone of success.  
That price for one thing gladly would I pay;  
The Dome, my idol, that I'd buy with life!  
345 But when the masters offered half the task  
Of the contested bronzes to myself  
To work at with Lorenzo I refused,  
Too filled with loathing for his niggling ways,  
Too filled with awe at his divine result.  
350 "His is the best; give it to him!" I said.  
"He is a sculptor; I an architect!"  
This I had added, but my soul was sore  
With its first search by doubt and questioning.

## BRUNELLESCHI

I was a boy then still—oh, twenty-four,  
355 But tardy riping. Architects take time.  
And I was yet to strive a score of years  
Ere I was let put shoulder to the task  
I lived but to accomplish. Had I known,  
My patience might have flagged; but eager hope  
360 Shone gorgeous from my fog of doubt; I knew,  
Better for my defeat, the only road  
For me to victory. An architect  
Essential to the core was I, as sure  
As was Ghiberti sculptor; nay, as sure  
365 As Donatello was so, even then,  
In careless ladhood, recognized and loved  
As such by me and cherisht; and as sure  
As was my dear Masaccio painter, then—  
Nay, on that instant, mayhap—being born,  
370 So soon to flame to genius most divine,  
A beauteous meteor in our morning skies,  
So soon to sink and vanish ere the day,  
Far sowing sky-seed.

Donatello then—

375 As much chagrined, more than as much elate,  
As I at the strife's ending, for his model gained,  
For such a child, proud praise—struck palm to palm  
With me, his elder by a half, that we would go

## MORNING

And seek art's fountain-head together. Word  
380 Came down the wind, from none knows whence,  
That the old ways were wanting. All the air  
Was rife with spirit not to be defined  
As of new dawn upon the bleakness past.  
And we, in whom the very heart of spring  
385 Leapt riotous with promise, strapt our packs  
And made off madly down the lane to Rome.  
Scarce we lookt back, or if our eyes reglimpsed  
The ancient cincture with its pride of towers—  
This withèd fagot buncht with beetling threat—  
390 'Twas not with wish to linger, but as one  
Who from a loved and longed-for mistress goes  
To hazard fortune for her—sooner gone  
The sooner come again—nor lets his love  
Slacken his pace wide-worldwards.  
395 What to gain  
Had we in mind up-treasured? Scarce we knew.  
We but obeyed an instinct sharp as fate  
That prickt us onward to an unknown goal.  
Youth, and the restless anguish of defeat,  
400 The sense of boundless spaces and of power  
Unmeasured and immeasurable, life,  
Love, faith, and God—these filled our consciousness.  
Rough was the way; our purse made Friday-fare;

## BRUNELLESCHI

Our packs tho' slender were too sore a load  
405 ( We wisht our packs and purses might exchange );  
Yet we were joyous as two larks in spring  
Loosed to the boundless ether, and our song  
Piped heartfelt from high blue of times to be.  
So hastened we, scarce witting, on to Rome.

410 And Rome repaid! Arnolfo was my sire,  
But Rome the milky dam that gave me suck.  
And Donatello—oh, the rapture keen  
To watch him blossom in that garth of eld!  
A downy velvet barely duskt his lip—  
415 His hand, it was already man's; his mind  
A forthright god's, creative; and his soul  
Flower-sweetly childlike, as it still is so.  
We lived as one. No nuptial bonds more close  
Could wed two natures than our friendship bound  
420 His heart and mine. We held each other's soul.  
No deeps, no backs or eddies of our lives  
Kept we o'er-glozèd from each other's view.  
And as the years went on he kept me young,  
Then and thereafter; my imprisoned soul,  
425 Denied expression's vent, had grizzled else  
And packt to crabbed hardness, impotent  
To wield the power itself conceived and was.



## MORNING

Love can no more than keep the channels free  
Wherethro' may life tumultuous pour its flood.

- 430 And I—not Donatello only but  
All Rome was mine, and all the boundless world  
That was Rome. Of the heady cup of time,  
Ripened within her deep-delved vaults, I drank  
Deep and divinely till my soul was filled.
- 435 Wherever crumbling fragment broke the sod  
In desert purlieus of the shrunken town  
I grubbed and prodded with a fevered zeal  
To have its secrets, as a dog will dig  
To lay his fangs upon a cherisht bone
- 440 Stored ripe in burial. Little scaped my flair;  
Tho' oft—as if a ghoul who sought in graves  
Unholy treasure—I was driven forth  
With harsh reviling; but as oft returned,  
Until, with endless work, enormous store
- 445 Of measured pelf I had laid by—rich stuff  
Wherewith I builded up anew in mind  
August antiquity.
- How 't was I lived,  
Those roofless winters long, I hardly know,
- 450 So distanced are they and so blued with life.  
My patrimony of a piece of land

## BRUNELLESCHI

I'd sold when first I went from Florence—all  
That I possessed save meager scraps of wage  
I got from tasks that famine found at hand  
455 To tide me over from one hungry spell  
Until the next. Empty I workt for wage,  
And filled I workt for glory, giving all,  
All of my best, to living with the forms,  
In crumbling and dishonored fragments hoar,  
460 That clothed the ancient world, and glorified  
Its all existence.

Oft when evening fell  
And the encircling hills were aureoled  
With sunset's flame, imperially clad  
465 In purple from the deepening west, I walkt  
In the dim dingle where the Forum lay  
Already dipt in gloom as if its dreams  
Of other days had brimmed it with a draft  
Of bitter-sweetness. Round me cattle browsed  
470 And silence was, where once the Cæsars sate  
The throne of earth, amid the clang of arms  
And babble of unnumbered multitudes,  
Prankt with all gorgeousness from all the ends  
Of prostrate empire. From the sweeping turf,  
475 From tufted copses, rose into the dusk  
Vast ghostly columns—giants, half their height

## MORNING

Awful up-turreting, who stationed there  
Consoleless, as unsavioed patriarchs  
Kept state, imprisoned yet in limbo, ere  
480 With love divine Christ stoopt to lift them out  
Who else were pinioned there eternally,  
Nor dead nor living, yet both dead and live.  
And in the eerie gloaming I could deem  
Those mighty forms out-raised to me their hands,  
485 Mute supplicants for my compassion. "We,"  
I mused them yearning, "are not blotcht with slime  
That cankered empire; wherefore be we doomed  
To stay discarded? Lift us to the light.  
Our souls are heirs of beauty's golden prime,  
490 And we bear message of that time serene  
To future ages. List thou to our word  
And speak it for us to the world. It waits!"

Like the rich wreckage of a treasure-fleet  
Engulft beneath the ravening seas of time  
495 With but the mastheads wind-bleacht, I divined  
The wealth that lay corroding in sunk holds,  
An age's ransom; and I set me on  
More wilful to redeem to daily use  
The wasting beauty. But of all the vast  
500 Innumeraibly thronging vestiges

## BRUNELLESCHI

Of ancient grandeur, two most filled my soul  
With wonder and my mind with endless zeal  
To have their hearts' whole secret out, and mine.  
As never elsewhere, surely, 'tis within  
505 The Amphitheater's o'erwhelming sweep  
Conception grasps the miracle of Rome.  
Within its awesome valley, walled about  
By mountain ledges shelving to the blue,  
Chaliced all empire. Whiles, at burning noon,  
510 I sought the umbrage of the corridors  
Which circle endlessly that vast ellipse  
To scape the oppressive awe that reigned and smote  
Within the roofless cincture, as old wine  
Had sod all conscience with cupt day, until,  
515 In anguish of sun-drunkenness, I fled  
To vaulted twilight. Thence again, from dreams  
Of glorious eld, refresht would I come forth  
To witness Evening at her altar rites,  
Coping the chalice with a filmy pall  
520 Of gentian shadow like a brooding wing.  
And whilom, when from out the mystic bowl  
Brimmed with the purple sacrament of night  
My mind had drunk oblivion, would my soul  
Espouse in dreams the soul of ancientry.  
525 'Tis from those spousals' sacred unison

## MORNING

Have sprung these children fresh wherewith is sown  
By us our Florence. Mother of our seed,  
The Theater hath stood for worldly power  
In spirit beauty, and hath vased the Word  
530 That Rome too was a vessel of the shrine,  
Whence after-time shall taste the sacrament.

Rome's sacred grandeur most the Theater,  
But most Rome's unity the Pantheon  
Symbols. Eternity! None other form  
535 Of human handiwork so speaks that thought  
With the unendedness that rounds it! Rome!  
None other thought so keeps her puissance  
As doth Eternity! One only creature  
Of the almighty Mind, the ends of earth  
540 Together all were gathered up within  
One fascicle of governance, that there,  
More certain of fruition, might be sown,  
And endlessly disseminated, seed  
Of life eternal. Prescient of its fate  
545 As emblem of the empire, both of man  
And of essential Wisdom, pagan priests  
Did sanctify that temple to gods seven  
Who o'er their darkness shed foreshadowing gleams  
Of very God—to Time, to Power, to Swiftmess,

## BRUNELLESCHI

550 Beauty, and Chastity, and, prince of these,  
Love, and the Sword that Love is girt withal.  
And so it stands epitome of Christ  
And of His Church, in chaste perfection framed  
And rounded into one with endless things.  
555 Crumbled, without, and craggy from the storms  
Of wasting winters and the ruthless hand  
Of spoilers, scarce the eye discerns at first  
A fearsome beauty, tho' the gracious porch  
Prepares and wins one on to enter straight.  
560 But like a saintly nature, cloistered close  
'Neath sackcloth and a front of haggard want,  
The spirit harbors there within, safe-shrined,  
Sweet, and abundant. Swiftly, from the port,  
Or ere the ponderous bronze hath clanged behind,  
565 The entrant halts, with awe confounded. . . . God!  
This is Thy House! . . . A cavern splendid, vast,  
Aflood with golden mellowness of gloom,  
Clothed with all sumptuous substance of the earth!  
Around, no window breaks the stately file  
570 Of niche and column, columned niche and wall;  
But from above alone there swims the day,  
A cirque of plumbless ether, thro' the dome  
In benediction, like the eye of God  
That looks serenely to the heart of things.

## MORNING

575 Oft have I seen a sheaf of streaming rays  
Pour thro' that sky-space from its fount unseen  
And down the coffered facets of the vault  
Strike seals of flaming gold as if the hand  
Of the Almighty had reacht down and touched  
580 To liquid life of fire the senseless stone,  
Senseless no longer, but a sentient soul  
Wrought inly.

There it was I gathered up,  
To treasure in my inmost being, funds  
585 Of inspiration and of reverence  
I else had wanted for the mighty task  
My mind made headway unto. Deep I searcht  
Into its secret making. How, and why,  
And in what sequence were the elements  
590 That made that greatness, wrought by feeble hands  
To power and beauty? If I gloated long  
To find the chaste proportions of an arch  
Or fix the spirit beauty of a shaft—  
Just so much lengthened, so much viewless curve,  
595 So burgeoned upward for the final grace—  
How more, bethink thee, was I rapt and pledged  
To master mastery in the mighty dome!

To build more beautiful was not for man;

## BRUNELLESCHI

But might I reach its beauty? Not for me  
600 The answer to that question. 'T was perchance  
A form less noble that I had to deal  
Withal—for must the circle stand alone  
As form of full perfection. And perchance  
Some freer hand, less loyal to the scheme  
605 Already sanctioned and imbedded deep  
In fundamental feeling, had devised  
Some fresh transition to the perfect form.  
I know not; for my mind was fixèd fast  
On the solution of the hardy task  
610 Arnolfo set. Its hardness made its charm  
More subtle and more potent. And the end—  
See! it is beautiful—and all my best  
Have I poured out, thro' all, thro' all my life  
To make it so. I will not question it!

615 But oh, the length of travail to that end;  
To but the putting shoulder to the work;  
To but the privilege to show my plan;  
To but the right to speak before the Board;  
To but the basis whereon I might speak;  
620 To but the power to make that basis sure!  
'T was into that abyss the years still poured  
The while I naught produced that might have lived



## MORNING

Had I been taken off—nothing that lasts  
Save friends and loving pupils. Cæsar so  
625 Saw life pass by and leave him in the shade,  
Whilst others pluckt their fruit and ate of it.  
Men who are masterful beyond the bounds  
Of their small epochs aye must wait till Time  
Hath given the glass the allotted turnings slow  
630 Ere to their stage the entrance-ways are cleared.  
But meanwhile, thinkest theirs a grateful task,  
To wait and watch the train of life go by  
And eat their hearts out for the chance to live?  
I saw Lorenzo swim the cresting wave  
635 Of sunshine and success, and many more  
Less gifted win a worthy place—just claims  
Put forth to honor's lasting name—while I,  
Conscious of greatness, kept the shadowy wings  
And dull despised background of the scene.

640 Those were the years my heart had aged and tired,  
Along with cooling blood and grizzling hairs,  
Had I not felt me richly blossoming  
In Donatello and Masaccio.  
They spoke my message in the countless ways  
645 The finger cannot follow, pouring forth  
A freshening flood of thought not theirs the less

## BRUNELLESCHI

For being pregnant with my spirit, ripe  
With a sane wisdom that had ne'er obtained  
In their unreasoned and impulsive power  
650 Elsewise. Their essence was eternal youth  
That knows no trammels and no even pace.  
I steadied their swift hands. I trimmed their sails  
In dangerous flaws. Well—I, Filippo, played  
Lorenzo's rôle to their Filippo's! See?  
655 I kept them careful, for the vital sap  
They kept alert in me.

Supple—and sweet,  
I hope, a little—those two kept my heart  
By their large understanding and rich power  
660 Of swift sure sympathy that glimpsed an end,  
No sooner shadowed by my first essay.  
They trailed my mind-ways by their insight keen.  
Their live encouragement establisht rock  
Under frail fancy's outworks, till defense  
665 Took shape aggressive of fixt purposes  
That lookt cock-sure unyieldingness—no more—  
To minds that gallopt up, and off. They say  
I'm set, that nothing budges me; nor guess  
How I have lived but by encouragement—  
670 I cannot breathe else. But the type of mind  
Far alienate from mine, which little brings

## MORNING

To stir my consciousness, which little pricks  
The spur of my presentment, I oppose  
With stolid fixèdness. And then some say  
675 That I am wilful and contrarious.

Will were not will were it not wilful! Will  
Were needful to a waiting task, and mine  
Hath mostly been but waiting.

But enough

680 Of such philosophy! 'Twas back and forth  
Thro' twenty arduous years, 'twixt schoolmate Rome  
And mistress Florence, ere the dangling prize  
Plumpt in my pocket, and e'en yet with thorns  
Thereto that kept it unenjoyable.

685 Lorenzo, yoked with me in equal power—  
A doomed duumvirate! In earlier days  
I had refused to weight him with my hand  
Upon his shoulder whilst he made his gates.  
I knew the folly of such harnessing,

690 And while it galled me gave him liberal rein  
To win his laurels. Now my score of years  
Must go to feed his emptiness.

No more

Knew he of building than his potter's clay.  
695 He had been taskt at the minutest things—  
Gates, glass, and gildings for the altar-top;

## BRUNELLESCHI

And ne'er his eye had scanned a broader space  
Than his two hands; or, if it scanned, with fear.  
Ah! but he'd had the wisdom sane-insane  
700 To join the Guild of Builders—to what end  
Requires more wisdom than I've gleaned to guess;  
For I think he intrigued not for the Dome—  
He feared it, rather. But he'd not the grace—  
When, as Filippo's opposite and so  
705 The one most like to chasten, he was drawn  
To yoke-up with me—flatly to refuse,  
As decency required. A useless pall  
Of lead hung on me was he from the first;  
And had it not been like the great refusal  
710 To cast aside the task that heaven had set,  
And peevishly to mope because full sway  
I could not have, I should have said them nay.  
“Or he or I; not both!” But for that he  
Was useless, and well knew him so, and that  
715 I knew that canny time would show it out,  
I took what I could get, one half the laud  
And twice the task—to count his presence there  
At least the burthen of the task itself!  
So we were off at last.  
720 But now let's off  
And scale my mountain wonder! Once again

## MORNING

Ere they cease breathing, glad these nostrils mine  
Shall scent the azure gardens of the sky  
From that high hollow hill, my bloom of blooms—  
725 The wonder-blossom of this town of flowers—  
Fairest corolla of this flower of towns!



# BRUNELLESCHI

## PART II—NOON

TIME: *The same. Midday.*

SCENE: *Within and on the Dome of Santa Maria del Fiore.*

PERSONS: *Brunelleschi and Andrea; and later Donatello  
and the workmen on the Dome. Brunelleschi speaks.*

IS DONATELLO there? I count on him  
To give a note of gala to this last  
Brief junket to the clouds. Astonishing  
730 How he keeps up that spirit! To be sure  
He hath but three score spring-tides to his name,  
And that's still April if the wind is right  
(And you are Donatello) e'en suppose  
You have two hearts, and one of them mine own,  
735 To wean from winter! April sure'll be May,  
With him along—not even last good-byes  
Could hold out showery 'gainst that sunniness.  
On, then! Belike we'll find him at the top,  
Where suns belong. Not earth could keep him down.  
740 He floats upon the world like buoyant gold  
On quicksilver.

## BRUNELLESCHI

How steep these steps, to feet  
With loads less light, prickt on by will so e'er  
To win the azure! Three score years and nine  
745 Had never ventured to essay them, but  
That two score planned them, and that three score's gone  
Already to their summit, blithe as morn.  
Yet nor so endless many nor so steep  
As steps impalpable I clomb of yore  
750 To give these day! I've earned them, and I've paid  
High value for their steepness, o'er and o'er  
Redoing in the undoing dark the deed  
Each day had ended.

Let me catch my breath,  
755 Ere we climb on, behind this parapet.

Again I shall not see thee, Florence, lie  
In languid loveliness beneath, thy towers  
Reversing in perspective, vanisht down  
And reaching earthwards, where I soon shall lie.  
760 How I have loved thee! Me no nuptial joys  
Have weaned from oneness with thy spirit's flower,  
Out-blossomed from my bosom. Only thee  
My heart hath yearnèd unto. Only thee  
My soul hath known in rapture. Only thee!  
765 Take thou this child that hath been born of us



## NOON

In spirit spousals, and upon thy breast  
Bear it forever as my pledge of troth  
In Heaven. All my being be up-caught  
And mystic-corporate therein with thine,  
770 A thing eternal, and forever thou!

And now the Stygian narrows of the stair  
Pent sidewise upward 'twixt the double vault,  
O'erarcht and buttressed round and overthwart!  
A breathing at each peep-hole—mind you that!  
775 Ha! Glimpse by glimpse we'll sum our Florence up,  
Minutest miniatures of beauty all.

First, over there's Palazzo Vecchio,  
The hoar old war-horse, armored cap-a-pie  
And shadowy-visored, thrusting high his fist  
780 Fierce-clencht and mailed, ready for the blow.

And now Or San Michele, in surprise,  
Lifts eyebrows o'er all shoulders round about,  
As who should watch, what tho' the neighbors drowse.

Then there's sweet Arno, lady lakelet slim,  
785 Aslipping 'neath her bridges thro' the town  
As sleek as satin with her silvery smile.

## BRUNELLESCHI

And here we have a band of citizens—  
Sky-lofty turrets—sullenly athreat,  
Each scowling at the other. Still is War  
790 Our patron spirit tho' o'erwreathed with flowers.

But stay! Our fateful Chain! I nearly bruised  
My head against your elbows, my good friend.  
A trifle rude to punch your papa so!  
'Twas I that fathered you—remember well!  
795 And what a botch Lorenzo made when he  
Pretended he knew all there was to know  
Of such as chains! We should have had our Dome  
About our heads if he had had his way.  
Oh, wondrous days that dropt a farthing dip  
800 Into the bushel-basket of the Board!  
I didn't have to make believe sick, as,  
In dudgeon, some of them made out I did.  
I was beyond endurance sick of him,  
Lorenzo, and of seeing him about  
805 And looking wise and careful and as if  
It all depended on him, when the most  
He ever ventured was to hem and haw  
When I was by, and then to put a spoke  
In every wheel behind my back. Why can't  
810 A man know what he's fit for? He can make,

## NOON

If there's but time, a marvel of a door.  
I'm free to say the one he's making now  
(And has been making since I can recall)  
Will far outdo the best was ever cast  
815 If he but keep it up. But as for domes—  
Well, domes are not his art, and mine they are.  
He wouldn't utter word when I was ill,  
He was so frightened—let the time drag on,  
With nothing building, till the men were wild  
820 To get ahead and the whole town was dazed  
To see the work stop short, and all the crew  
Idle and boozing round the place. You see  
The work had reacht a stage most critical.  
The overhanging, inward, of the stone  
825 Was now so great the men all feared to work  
(No wonder, too) unless a scaffolding  
And hoardings were set up. And then again  
The binding-chain to keep the upper works,  
Once built, from thrusting out in vast collapse  
830 Must now be placed. A subtle problem each.  
  
When once I got about again I saw  
The time had come for action. All the town  
Was rife with rumors most discreditable.  
The Dome was doomed—nay, damned. The very men

## BRUNELLESCHI

835 On whom I most depended were at point  
Of mutiny, infect with panic fear  
Even to mount the works—reflection sure  
Of poor Lorenzo's feebleness. Rule men  
By vacillation? Never! Certainty—  
840 That is your cue for masters. But be sure  
Your certainty is safe—else failure sure!  
Not needful best, but good—the chance to prove  
What's best will come only when all is done,  
The thing already judged as right. Not art  
845 I'm speaking of, but action. Action then,  
Not art, was needful. And I acted soon.  
"You see," I said, "the folly of two men  
As masters of one task. Nor he nor I  
Is master while we both are so. Divide  
850 The work. There are two tasks at hand. Give him  
His choice."

Lorenzo-like he chose the chain—  
And lucky 't was. The scaffold was the road  
To instant credit and to confidence,  
855 Tho' but the moment's makeshift; while the chain  
Scarce mattered for the nonce, tho' pregnant 't was  
With future fate for good or ill—a dome  
Or a disaster.

Half an hour's enough

## NOON

- 860 (When you have travailed half a life before  
To meet that half-hour) to show forth a scheme,  
And match with manhood. Scarcely that, it was,  
Before my men were eager to begin,  
So simple and so safe my method was,
- 865 So entertaining in its childlikeness,  
Like most big things. And while Lorenzo sweat  
About one foolish lap of chain, we slung  
Our scaffold quite around, a perfect trough  
To work in.
- 870 But the chain? The Dome hung now  
'Twixt heaven and earth—'twixt fortune and the grave—  
And I was taskless, all my men dismissed,  
Waiting until Lorenzo's work was done.  
You see the situation. I must be
- 875 Called in, advised with; and on such a thing  
As he had botcht but one report could make—  
'Twas worthless. Easy as I might I was  
On old Lorenzo; easy could not be.  
He was a good man in the wrongest place.
- 880 I set him down as lightly as I could—  
To his relief, I'm sure. Tho' he took care  
To draw his stipend for a year or so  
His ghost was laid. No more he haunted me.

## BRUNELLESCHI

And big he showed—most unexpected big—  
885 When later on he let me lend a hand  
At casting his great bronzes; ne'er a word  
To sting regret within me to remorse.  
Take thou not queer Lorenzo for a cad;  
He's good-sort human, inwardly—deep in!

890 One other battle royal must I win  
Ere the Dome reacht its zenith. Some my men,  
Pampered with adulation by the crowd  
(For now the Dome so marcht they thought themselves,  
And were thought of as heroes on the pave—  
895 Lordly aristocrats of labor), some  
Began to say, "The Dome is ours. We hold  
In our right hands its making. Not again,  
Should we drop out, could they our places fill.  
And not again, when this is finisht, we  
900 Shall chance upon its like, for livelihood.  
Who locketh not his larder soon shall lack.  
Let us but smite now while the iron is hot  
And reap our harvest!" Mingled metaphors  
That matcht their logic lame! I felt the storm  
905 In the close sullen weather of their look  
When for the ordering of the hourly task  
I voiced my will; tho' I no notice took

## NOON

Lest the storm break—perchance it might blow o'er.  
But naught save thunder eases thunder-heads;  
910 So they played Jove a while, and thundered sore.

But architecture is not solitaire.  
The Dome was not my making, nor was't theirs.  
It was the town's. And deep in principle  
I saw their claims a menace, even tho'  
915 The letter of their law seem righteous.

There!

Thro' this last loophole ere we gain the top,  
See you the lift serene of Giotto's tower?  
'Twas there I poised my purpose. Oft and oft,  
920 When the crowd cramped me and I needed air  
Of solitude to breathe me to myself,  
I climbed the lonely terrace of the tower  
To see things whole, unfrittered by detail,  
As one might pray upon a mountain-top.  
925 First, as a child, I there had glimpsed the Dome  
Achieved—me dedicate to its achievement.  
Fateful perspective! So I gained a force  
Of singleness and wholeness always there  
On the sky-platform. So it stands to me  
930 Supreme in purpose—loftiest poise of power,  
And fairest marriage of the earth with heaven

## BRUNELLESCHI

Man's hand hath coupled, as 't were hand of God's.  
An hour in skydom cleansed my turbid mind  
That it pellucid ran and forceful. Straight  
935 Across the interval 'twixt mount and mount  
I flung my manifesto—oh, not heard  
Of course by those who swarmed the scaffoldings,  
But thus I eased me—and a breathless hour  
Made good my wind-tossed challenge. They must go!  
940 Their claims were canceled. Florence was the source  
Whence sprang the undertaking, and her weal  
Was paramount. I would not see her held  
And throttled by a gang of thugs whose palms  
Were itching but for lucre. They must go!  
945 No explanation gave I, for he saps  
The argument of force who salves the blow  
With vain palaver; simply—they must go!

This was a Saturday. On Monday morn  
I had a crew of masons at the Dome  
950 Gathered in secret on the Sunday night  
And pledged to silence till they came to work.  
Before the week was up the game was won;  
My old crestfallen foreman came to beg  
For reinstatement with the other men.  
955 And was I glad to get them back? At wage



## NOON

Lower than they had got before the fight!  
They've never bothered since.

But hist! I hear  
Their voices as we near their height, down thro'  
960 The hatchway floating. Bless 'em, how they sing  
At the blest work like larks amid the blue—  
The thugs I kept from pelf at point of sword!  
They are my very hands, did they but know.  
Ah, but they need my hand to keep 'em so!

965 One more good breathing and we are arrived.  
The air is hereabouts more heavenly pure  
Than even nature's mountain-summits shed  
Upon the jaded spirit. Mary's fane  
Climaxeth to most freshing loveliness  
970 Thus claspt by boundless-breathing heaven.

At last!

It's rare to climb a mountain thro' a cave,  
And burst from shelving twilight on a world  
Aglitter!

975 And aglitter with such gauds!  
My Donatello, like the sun himself  
For bravery! This golden doublet well  
Becomes thy youth. The basket must be full,  
Or must have been ere gleaming coin like this

## BRUNELLESCHI

980 Leakt out of it. My cup had not been full  
Hadst thou not come this day to celebrate  
My last up-coming with me.

Greetings all!

Hands all, you make a marvel. Music ne'er  
985 Rang true as ring your trowels. Steel on stone—  
They be my troubadours!

Among the clouds

This fabric's marble all immaculate  
Finds fit and friendly home; their milky breasts  
990 Are not more spotless than our shrine that lifts  
Its perforate ecstasy of chiseled snow  
Into the airy zenith, point and spire  
Of symbolized sweetness to the sons of men—  
A lily whose frail petals turn aback  
995 In dimpling whorls around the claspèd bud  
In rippling splendor of last loveliness,  
One with the heavens. That is my dream of dreams.  
Might I but live to see it blossom forth!

But you, dear friends, let them not change my plan!  
1000 You know the wonders that have been proposed—  
The witless schemes that, since we closed the Dome,  
The know-alls have put forward—I, of course,  
The Dome's imaginer, incapable

## NOON

Of capping it, tho' all the world beside  
1005 Know how it should be finisht! You recall  
The lady Gaddi's topknot? Milliners,  
March hares, and mountebanks are fecund all  
At capping climaxes of shrine-work. Bah!  
At heights where genius trembles lest it fall  
1010 You'll find all such folk quite at home. That's why,  
In fear of future patchwork when no more  
By sonneteering I can silence them,  
I have forestalled suggestions with cut stone—  
Enough, they say, to build another church  
1015 Atop o' this! So be't—a shrine apart  
To yearn and soar unfaltering up the blue!  
All's done but setting, and that goes apace,  
Thanks to these faithful hands—if faithful kept!

How lang'rous up the hills the town is lapt—  
1020 In crumbled velvet the long river-plain  
Clothing, and lipping o'er each undulance  
Like rugs rich-piled from morning's ancient looms;  
All generously dyed with smoky hues  
Of ochres and of umbers and of earths  
1025 Riped rusty-ruddy 'neath hoar brooding suns,  
And dull film-bloomed as dusty leopard-skins!  
Never I knew Val d'Arno sweet as now

## BRUNELLESCHI

When bitter mingles with its sweetness that  
I nevermore may view it thus, above,  
1030 Master, and one with this my mastery.  
Never were hills so lusciously embloomed  
With florent verdancy as these mine eyes—  
Waxt living things endowed with super-sense,  
The all-life sentience that's the architect's—  
1035 Now breathe and drink into their inmost self  
And clasp with love's embraces to their heart  
In ecstasy of voiceless longing! Ah!  
This bitter-sweetness of last times! Ah me!

Look where I will there leap to life renewed  
1040 Remembrances that lift the tapestry  
Of three score cycles 'fore me. O'er again,  
Within a moment's musing, all my life  
I pass in swift review, as men who drown,  
Adrown in azure. But look where I will  
1045 I see no task accomplisht—all's to do  
As were I yet a youth untried. Naught save  
My tiny cell in Santa Croce's garth  
Of all the tasks is nested quite, and that  
Least wingèd of them all. Had I but come  
1050 Of age ere one-and-forty there'd been time  
To round the region of a full career

## NOON

And to define its cincture. Now, I know  
That when my lamps are out there may be some  
Who faithfully will strive not to belie  
1055 The large, serene intent wherewith I wrought;  
That comforts me. But still there'll many be  
Who wilfully or wantonly will work,  
Or ignorantly, to bring all to naught  
My doing and obscure my meaning. They  
1060 Are in my bosom who'll betray my art—  
Well-meaning Frank and others of his ilk.  
And out beyond my circle close of those  
Whose hands are as my living flesh, whose faith  
Will guard my concept as their very own,  
1065 Are countless whom my rimèd darts have barbed  
To rankle 'gainst me. They have dogged my steps  
With fangs and yelping, and have clogged my course  
With sand and quagmires of primed argument  
Thro' all my life, till now the hour's at hand  
1070 When I must leave chaotic all my works—  
My realm unwalled, exposed to free attack,  
My song unsung, my visions unfulfilled—  
All, all my tasks loose-ended. Was e'er life  
So full of labors and so void of deed?  
1075 I reap not who have sown—my tragedy,  
Perchance all life's. Yet I'd not change my strife

## BRUNELLESCHI

Of seed-time for their harvest who ne'er knew  
The sweat of sowing, the sharp appetite  
And savor of the furrow. Furrowed deep  
1080 My Florence is by this right hand of mine,  
And seeded by this brain's broad sowing, lopt  
To the quick sap, and pleacht to fruitfulness.

Down there below the serried gable-saw  
Of Santa Croce nests my dewy lark,  
1085 My one lone birdling with a trill in flower.  
It harps my heart-strings. Santo Spirito  
Across the river gropes into his own,  
Serene and spacious tho' fragmental still.  
And San Lorenzo, yet a king uncrowned!  
1090 All, all unfinisht; e'en my palaces,  
That came too late, late autumn's bounty scant,  
To set their fruit ere niggard-nipping frost—  
Children of chillèd loins that must be riped  
Orphans on wind-blown leafless branches. All,  
1095 All, all are poniards in me.

Ah, but most—  
More than mine own, deep biters as they be—  
Rankles that smooth-faced house of Cosimo,  
Dark-veilèd this steep noon, usurping where  
1100 By right my sun-bright portent should have shone

## NOON

But for one highwayman. With shrewdest steel  
Of smug and smiling treachery my friend,  
Smug smiling Michelozzo, reacht me once  
Full in the back when I mistook him for  
1105 My armed support, my friend as yours, and one  
Of our close circle. Him upon my knee  
I'd dandled, fed good pap of artistry,  
Bred form and feature to, and to the world  
Issued, stampd sound and skilful. You recall  
1110 How he was with us ever on the works  
Hanging upon our words; not venturesome  
To have his say, as having naught to speak,  
But drinking ever from your cup and mine  
And cameling for use in desert thirsts.  
1115 Not without talent—oh, I grant you that—  
A gift for gathering and storing up  
Of all that might contribute to his end  
Of making good, will-nilly, with the world!  
A skilled manipulator, subtly framed  
1120 To pouch the game,—the more that him no pains  
Preoccupy with the beyond of deed,  
Its furthestmost significance and range.  
He's no creative mind, that leaps forthright  
Beyond the oilèd smoothness of the known,  
1125 The safe, the rutted road, to regions far,

## BRUNELLESCHI

Incalculable, challenging, where firsts,  
Firsts only among minds, dare venture. No!  
Essential seconds are his kind, who sift  
What betters ravish from the void, and do  
1130 In shelter of past judgments what the firsts  
Conceive, attempt, but fail to bring to end  
Because they stumble up untrodden paths.

Look there!—and there! My Pitti's tortoise-walls  
That creep to being—and his Medici!  
1135 His sudden palace rubbing-of-the-lamp  
Hath safe the plaudits of our yesterdays;  
My plodder shall go far—tomorrow's praise  
May make his pillow easy. And tho' now  
For years his house hath harbored Medici  
1140 And Pitti frets to see his pile not rooft,  
Yet Medici is Pitti's get. 'T was I  
That set the pace of pride for Cosimo  
He dared not venture; far too bold, it seems,  
For craven times and hearts; but from the loins  
1145 Of my great fancy sprang my rival's thought,  
Tempered, and temperate, and fitting home  
To commonplace of life, unriskful. Mine—  
The motive Medici had spurned, rewrought  
In power for Pitti (stript, alack, of all



## NOON

- 1150 Its carven joy of gorgeous heraldry) —  
There, late, too late, it rises; but a torse,  
Yet of a god! It hath such bravery  
Of bigness and proportion as the Torse,  
Compact of vigorous antiquity,  
1155 Digged from Colonna's garden t' other day,  
That makes Rome very Greece for majesty.  
I hapt in Rome then at the Pope's behest,  
And with these very eyes beheld rebirth,  
From its forgotten grave, of marble Awe.  
1160 Thence I got word of greatness for the task  
Of princely housing holding then my hand.  
You'll see the Torse's bigness in that work.

- But 't was before the hour of fate was ripe.  
He wanted no cathedral for his house —  
1165 Not Cosimo! 'T was so he put me down  
When I before his dazzled eyes deployed,  
In rhythmic pomp of prideful blazonry,  
The plastical presentment of the wish  
That trump to empire in his heart of hearts,  
1170 Yet craftily o'erwrought and smothered deep  
'Neath padded coverture of humbleness,  
That thence no cry from vibrant throats outbreathe  
To waken up the people's first alarm.

## BRUNELLESCHI

As when ere some great rite deep silence broods  
1175 O'er the awed rapture of a twilight throng,  
And every heart halts breathless for a sound  
To thrill the expectant emptiness; beyond,  
Beyond the pulsate smother of sealed door  
Beyond sealed door, dumb room beyond dumb room,  
1180 The silken-trained processional prepares,  
And lifts the lisping of the quire divine,  
Itself its song's sole audience: so I knew,  
Beyond the unbroke seals of Cosimo  
His mind, and still within his outward front  
1185 So modest—nay, so mean—the pæan proud  
That murmurous prepared a future shout,  
Ominous kin to clank. Intuitive  
I, artist, saw (with eyes which on worn knees  
Searcht inward, pricking ear for that the drum  
1190 Trembled not yet with) what must be, one day,  
The shame of our evolving history  
Not yet in being, and the coiled spring  
Of his heart and of Florence's. That spring  
I made the motive of the majesty  
1195 I clothed his habitation stiff withal,  
Like cloth-of-gold ashimmer, rich impearled—  
Symbol of sovranty, the mask and show  
Of inward quicks he dared not yet to face

NOON

Or venture forth upon; which he knew not,  
1200 Perchance, stretcht treacherous as morning glass,  
Tempting steeled feet o'er thinness. My device,  
My rich imagined house interpretive,  
Flasht mirror-wise his hidden longing's face  
On his shockt consciousness.

1205 "No! No!" he cried,  
 "Not such thoughts in my inmost being live—  
 All innocent of rule am I at heart!  
 Or if there spring, deep down, a seed of lust  
 For princehood, still that shoot must screen its push  
 1210 To life, lest Florence ravish my safe place  
 Of treasure, and my stirps do deathward. No!  
 Enough, that what of power I have, I have  
 All unannounced—the substance, not the face.  
 The face hath force to quench young power's fount  
 1215 As Gorgon froze hope's life-blood. Palaces  
 Speak loud; I merely want a whispered tale  
 Of merchant modesty."

## A whispered tale!

Ye gods! And 'twas for me to breathe in stone,  
1220 "This man is but a townsman like us all—  
There is no harm in him—see but this mask—  
Only a modest trader."

## Artistry,

## BRUNELLESCHI

The soul behind my house interpretive,  
1225 Betrayed itself so!

Character, not lies,  
Is my art! Inner springs of consciousness  
And seedlings of futurity that grope  
Beneath thick-heaped strata of old Adam  
1230 In crannied rocks of selfhood, unsuspect,  
'Tis the prime task o' th' architect to voice  
As of the portraitist. Who cares to show  
But the dry husking of his subject's soul,  
And surface scorings, is far kin of him  
1235 Who makes but to interpret.

### Centuries

Of senseless aping of the north—in forms  
Our sunshine ne'er claspt hands with, and whose tongue  
Our tongues took hardly—had seared up, the while  
1240 Thro' the long dark the southland slept, men's sense  
Of the organic framework of all art,  
And most of mine, the builder's. Cosimo  
Spake Florence truly when he askt for lies,  
Asking for art for cover. But you know—  
1245 None better, Donatello—very truth,  
Naught else, truth integral and poignant 'tis  
That lifts art out of earthiness on wings  
That fan the empyrean. And 't was truth,

## NOON

Divined by intuitions all divine,  
1250 That Cosimo 'd have none of.

Bottom-wrought—

As only he who dares behold a soul  
Face outward and to grapple home with it  
Can be wrought to despal of the craven  
1255 Who safe behind accrete soul-fences still,  
Perforce of custom, will ensconce himself  
And smile content with surfacing—I sneered,  
“Not art then 'tis you want, but subtlety—  
Which is a kinder word for lying!”

1260

He,

Whose wont you know was flabby white, like worms  
You startle fatly lurking under stones,  
Flamed fire-bright at such touching; but cold steel  
From his eyes' scabbard flasht, and flesht me sharp,  
1265 Home to the hilt. “Your subtleties,” he hissed,  
“Be for your subtleness, that peeps behind  
The decencies indecently. Have done!  
True art gives cover; 'tis false art betrays,  
False to the purposes behind the veil.  
1270 All life is built by veiling.”

There it was—

The secret of his potence, the crass warp  
Wherethro' slid swift the shuttle of his mind,

## BRUNELLESCHI

Weaving the patterned fabric of deceit  
1275 To cloak his crescence!

Mad with rage, deep stung  
By th' spiteful venom of his touchiness,  
I crasht my clenched fist thro' the frail thing  
So many months of hotfoot toil had reared,  
1280 And crusht its fragile framework into naught—  
The apple of my eye, for from the deeps  
And hidden places of my second sight  
It had sprung forth, the childing of the void  
Impregnate of my will in potency  
1285 Prophetic!

See yon smugness there below—  
Milder and harmlesser than aught the town  
Can show else, for the front of family  
Or pride or power! Oh, very meek and smooth  
1290 It sits and sits sweet smiling by the way,  
And hawks its heart to the road's beckoning,  
Unnotably pretentious; notablest  
In all the town for pretense, notablest  
As coadjutor of the game he plays,  
1295 Its shy, suave owner, to make good the hold  
That even now grows subtler and more sure  
On the concupiscence of Florence!

God!

## NOON

At that self instant when my talons tore  
1300 The vitals from my Titan, underneath  
A scarlet hood alongside hid, approved,  
The model that had won his heart, the whore  
He chose to house him — Michelozzo's lie,  
Bastardly spawn of kingly seed of mine  
1305 He'd watcht put forth when oft and oft again  
He came to greet me friendly. Oh, you know  
How I despised to hoard my secret; how  
I stood to publish my full power abroad  
For the world's weal, in over-proud contempt,  
1310 Mayhap, of selfish pride — proud pridelessness  
That hath undone me, fool of proudest pride!

But silence, proud Filippo! Hold thy tongue,  
Lest rage bewray thy inward ravensings!  
Those be old ulcers cleansed by kinder years.  
1315 In this keen upward of thin April air  
From whence the boundless ranging of the eye  
Sights large the checkered telltale of the town,  
And, seeing whole, yet sees in sharp detail  
The open riddles of its skyward face  
1320 (For towns, like men, ope heart but to the blue),  
Now, in aloofness of long-coolèd thought  
Freshened with friendship for that subtle hand

## BRUNELLESCHI

Which, while it worms to maw what I would not  
It ere get hold on, knows to bright bright gold,  
1325 And gladden ancient Florence with young zest—  
I see us, Cosimo and me, two types  
Of onwardness, which, meeting in the lists  
Of life, encounter—doughty champions, both,  
Of selfsame hosts of conquest; 'gainst the world  
1330 When pitted, single for advance; yet, coped  
In the blind mêlée of the jousting-field,  
At odds most rashly. I can see his art—  
The art that comfort gives—a subtle thing  
Of silk-soft tread, whose suave amenity  
1335 Sweetens and riches being, brothers man  
And clothes his consciousness with textiles fine  
That fleece his nest with velvet. His the task  
To skirmish far afield and commandeer  
All Capuan luxuries for the long campaign—  
1340 With risk of Capuan looseness. Cosimo  
Hath made our Florence sweeter on the tooth  
And softer under bone; I thank him for 't,  
And for his friendly hand, forgetting soon  
My sooner trespass. But I know that art—  
1345 Our art, which is a thing of mastery—  
Strikes deeper than the surface, rounds a range  
Vaster than scout-purveyors of earth-sweets



## NOON

Ere dreamed of searching, and proves good its claim  
To larger regions of the soul than they  
1350 Can compass in their vastest views. I know  
Great art full-panoplied for war, and armed  
With the bright glaive of light. Not love she bears  
But that sharp sword which leaps to the deep heart  
Of things, and outs love's secrets; forges on  
1355 Into the vast unknown and cleaves a way  
Thro' grewsome forest and o'er desert wild  
Unto the hold creational, whence spring  
The founts of being, one with Him who wields  
The wand supernal. As the Master saith,  
1360 "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth:  
I came not to send peace, but a sword,"  
So enters the Eternal into man,  
Whether He come as Christ into the world  
To ransom heart-stuff from assault of sin,  
1365 Or come as force creative, to redeem  
The promise of man's conscience, to lay low  
The beast of grossness, and to raise up heads  
That slumber till His coming—to raise up  
Heights that shall look upon His face and shine  
1370 Bright beacons to the hindmost.

These be all  
Divine, inexplicable mysteries.

## BRUNELLESCHI

You know, my friends, we be but instruments,  
No more, we artists; blades whose tempered steel  
1375 Life sharpens to swift practice, grinding down  
Their native roughness to such razor-edge  
As slips 'twixt life and death, 'twixt false and true.  
God! and when hearts are rubbed thus, who shall say  
The anguish of that sharpening? None may guess  
1380 Their midnights, their beseechings, their revolts,  
Their up-in-arms against the law of life  
That grips them fast to loathe and to delight  
In one same act, of making and destroying,  
Of striking to the bottom to lay ope  
1385 The sores and grafts of life (oh, horrid tasks  
Of swift red lopping!), to the very bone  
Slashing the growth convention, to the rock  
Clearing débris of ages, so to rear  
A fairer fane of beauty which shall tower,  
1390 A city on a hill, that men shall know  
O'er stretcht-out plains of generations, fair  
As moon-kissed alabaster 'gainst the night—  
A pinnacled, spiring splendor's mystic web  
Of lucent chiseling!  
1395 O Christ, how fine  
Are these, Thy instruments of making, ground  
Betwixt the upper and the lower—blades

## NOON

Thou sharpenest, or grains (I know not which)  
Of corn Thou bruiseest into snowy dust  
1400 To feed the generations—fertilized  
Thro' bruising's death to mystic fruit of life!  
My figures melt like rivers in a sea  
Of light ashimmer in a rich mirage  
That lures us on across life's boundless sands  
1405 To Edens endlessly removed.

No more!

Now to those hands that wait to know my hest,  
This hour of mine atop flies on apace.



# BRUNELLESCHI

## PART III—EVENING

TIME: *Sunset and dusk of the same day.*

SCENE: *The slopes below San Miniato, overlooking Florence.*

PERSONS: *Brunelleschi and Donatello.*

*Brunelleschi speaks.*

THINE arm, Donato, up these cypress glooms.  
1410 Tide thou me o'er this deep sward, blanchly sprayed  
And fresh with breathing fragrance; up the swell  
To the sheened harborage of sunset-spilth  
Oozing from cloud-cliff ledges of the west  
To yon bronze pond of even, cypress-walled.  
1415 Fragile as fingers phantom-thin, those spires  
Of dun grove-sanctuaries lean aloft  
And answer the lush zephyrs' buoyancy,  
More sensitive than seaweeds to the deep's  
Inconstant instance. Beckon they to eve's  
1420 Pale primrose leagues of lucence, "Hitherward,  
In waters of submerging ecstasy  
Transfused, pour down, baptize, anoint us, one  
With everlasting, glorious farewells!"

## BRUNELLESCHI

Or reads my heart its conscience into theirs,  
1425 That thus I voice them? Sunset and Farewell—  
They walk companionly the shadowy aisles  
Of my heart's cloister, silent of today,  
Reverberant alone of bygone things,  
In memory. . . .

1430 In memory, O Gift—  
O bounteous gift, not niggard as men say,  
Calling thee Donatello—memory  
Of thee and of thine ancient giving! This,  
Thine arm that crutcheth me, upbears in sooth  
1435 My heavy spirit more than earthly weight.  
Thou so hast ever done; I thank thee. Words—  
What be they when the heart is full? Wan shapes  
That swoon unrecognizable beneath  
The flood of feeling, not to be reclaimed!

1440 And words, to me, thou know'st, have ever been  
But exercise of torture, tearing way  
From sealèd treasure-chambers of my soul  
In torment; for my natal tongue—and thine—  
Is one of forms, of symbols of no sound,  
1445 That discourse hold not with the gossip ear  
But with the eye, and thro' the plastic sense,  
Touch in imagination. Pardon thou  
My want of wordy-wise conveyancing;

## EVENING

My heart's estates are thine inheritance  
1450 By right unwrit. Thou 'st known to read my thought,  
My deep's emotion, in the printless page  
Of wall and bastion, colonnade and tower,  
And (fullest witness of my soul's desire)  
My Dome's immortal palimpsest of love.  
1455 Corporate art thou in that perfectness.  
Its resolute assurance, pausing yet  
This side of self-sufficiency; its swift  
Abandon, which a delicate restraint  
Reins in from recklessness; its vital verve,  
1460 Whose breezy freshness gentle manners make  
Kindly demure—these are thy gifts to it,  
In that thou gavest me thy love to keep,  
And, keeping, I imbibed it till my soul  
Knew not the metes betwixt its own and thine,  
1465 Drowned in affection's flood-tide. I know not  
How makers can mature in isolate  
And self-sufficing ownness. Nay, methinks  
Such beings be not as can mount alone,  
Amid the threat and scuffle of the world,  
1470 Up gateways of the day. Companionship—  
In ends akin, in pace along the road,  
In tongue, in taste—is needful to the task.  
I, whom our Florentines count loneliest,

## BRUNELLESCHI

How have I been befriended! Never else  
1475 Had I been borne to take the onward wave  
And win toward harbor—harbor never yet  
Man might attain to, ere the falling night.

Night falls apace. More stoutly up these glooms  
Speed ye, my cloddy footsteps, to the space  
1480 Whence are these shadows washt, whence o'er the vale  
Mine eyes may plane as on a level wing.  
Once more—as God looks down upon His world,  
The handiwork He loves so well His eye  
Parts never from it—I must gaze upon  
1485 My masterwork adown these heights removed.

Now glimmers west-washt silver forth the bronze  
Of dwindling cypresses—the dais'd shrine  
Of far San Miniato, regent hoar,  
Unquestioned, on the headland of the hills  
1490 Up-thronèd high, whom prostrate valleys yield  
Sweeping obeisance unto. Pearly dew  
Now drench and sanctify that saintly front  
With kisses of wan even. Lo, the flush  
Which blooms his ancience at the pure salute!

1495 How oft in days agoe have I toiled up



## EVENING

These highlands in saint pilgrimage to learn  
The lessons of yon ancient! Thence the lead  
I followed—far, far off—when Cosimo  
Gave me to build anew the rotting fane  
1500 Of San Lorenzo. Santo Spirito  
As well is of his blood, and proudest prince  
Of that great strain. Recall, Donato, hours  
We friended o'er these hills and dreamed the day  
When Florence should awake and know us hers!  
1505 E'en then, before I knew me architect,  
I glimpsed the perfecting of motives yet  
Inchoate or abortive in the frame  
Of sire San Miniato. After-years—  
When I at length had crossed my Rubicon,  
1510 Campaigning Romeward—fixt those motives' fate,  
When you and I ranged over the seven hills  
Mid churches of the early faith; for then  
I knew San Miniato for the van  
Of the far-purposed army of true type,  
1515 Outpost of sane tradition. Mindest thou  
The vineyard-height of the hill Aventine,  
How o'er the brink it beetles of the swirl  
Of ochre Tiber? On its brow, afar  
And lonely from now haunts of men—sole rest,  
1520 Or well nigh, of the teeming hordes that erst

## BRUNELLESCHI

Peopled its slopes with proletariat—  
Upon the brow of Aventine is set  
Rome's clearest witness of the morn devout  
Whence rays our day of Christdom: humblemost  
1525 Santa Sabina. There I felt my heart  
Touched to its deepest sense of simpleness  
And childly trust. By beauties unobscured  
Which glorify the shrines of loftier saints,  
That house of quietness makes room for prayer  
1530 Spontaneous, uncompulsèd of all spur  
Of splendor or of poignance figurate.  
Its very bareness breeds a broader faith.  
Its rudeness links one with the Manger-born,  
Its pureness with His sacring. Sacrifice  
1535 Is writ upon its gates, in freighted cross  
First-fruit exemplar from the sculptor's tool  
In that rash kind. ("Take thou a bit of wood  
And fashion me that Agony!" recall'st,  
O Donatello?) Me that grandeur took  
1540 Of self sincerity, and on a day  
I wrought thereafter.  
Too much, thinkest thou,  
I prate of bygones? too much base my mind  
On olden wont? Thy hand hath found a means  
1545 To work its way unhampered, tho' thine art

## EVENING

Drew milk from ancient udders, as mine own.  
Yet but bethink thee! Sculpture deals with man,  
Life's great convention, ever help at hand  
And scapeless even wouldst thou scape its prop;  
1550 Limning, not less so. But we architects  
Handle imagined forms, by architects  
Created, our forerunners—timeless kin,  
Voiceless yet partners of the compact. Ours  
Convention with gone fellows, whose built words  
1555 Gain usufruct of meaning in the mouths  
Of thrifful generations. Therefore art  
In my kind is antiquity re-youthed,  
New-furbisht fresher for its anciency.  
I reverence the past as thou, Donato,  
1560 Worship'st fine human figure, as the type  
Whence thou derivest freedom to essay  
Outward in realms thine only; scrupulous  
To guard essential likeness to the kind  
On pain of losing truth in license.  
1565 Ha!  
Behold! Once from the shades enfranchised, bursts  
A universal glamour of doomed day!  
Tho' thou art fled, O Lucence, tarrieth  
The spirit of thy splendor, nebulous  
1570 Out airy vasts of scintillance. Unbound,

## BRUNELLESCHI

The rich ambrosian tresses of the orb  
Departed, riot-streaming, swathe the void  
Abyss illimitable of the heavens—  
Auroral aura of Divinity!

1575 On fiery front of Godhead Sinai gazed  
Sole scatheless; us 'tis now vouchsafed to glimpse  
In rapture Godhead's radiant aureole,  
That whelms eve's desert welkin with flood-flame  
Out-glorying Apollo! Ne'er was sight  
1580 So dazzling with long-dalliant gorgeousness'  
Loose-lapsing tendrils and out-shredded films  
Of dissipate liquescent fire, as now  
Zeniths Val d' Arno, sheer-o'erleaping!

Oh,

1585 How is Thy greatness magnified, O Lord,  
By this adumbrance of Thy majesty!  
The day hath left but trails impalpable  
Of the supernal progress; yet the cheek  
Blanches and pricks with chill of awed surmise,  
1590 The heart leaps up and halts in ecstasy  
At but this pale remembrance of day's loss,  
As 't were faint fragrance of an hour forgot  
Wafted adown the airy aisles of dreamland.

Lo, and the vale! Outspread beneath the cope

## EVENING

1595 Of skiey conflagration, how is it  
Beholden to that glory, counter-tinct  
Responsive to candescent radiance  
And steep in variant empery of hues  
That clothe the footstool of the purple throne  
1600 With throneful splendor! On the velvet breast  
Of earth's unearthly beauty flames one gem,  
Up-founting in distinction moltenly  
And catching sky-fire on its sole-bright brow.  
O Dome that art my skiey part and whole  
1605 Of my sky-yearning, now hath fallen on thee  
The sanctifying ray of Heaven and bred  
Transcendence in thee—this my heart a clod  
That hath brought forth a cloud of glory!

Friend,

1610 Dear friend, this fusion of the world with heaven  
Melteth old hatred to a shamèd thing.  
My Child hath found the glamour of the sky  
And shines redeemèd; the eleventh hour  
Hath overtaken my harsh-heartedness.  
1615 It shall not be so. Take my testament:  
My Child, that I have borne and given suck,  
And brought most-way to manhood—yea, my Dome—  
I do bequeath it to mine enemy,  
Whom I have hated. He will cherish it.

## BRUNELLESCHI

1620 I know him, and have hated him the more  
For that I knew him all unhateable:  
Weak once and human, merely — Michelozzo.  
I cannot climb to Him who on the rock  
Of weakness full-forgiven set His throne,  
1625 Unless unfardeled of that hating. . . .

Gone!

E'en as we wonder — gone! As memory  
Evades reluctant, like a breathed-on flame,  
And into darkness wavers and withdraws —  
1630 As young men's visions fade to old men's dreams —  
The day's last lingering splendor now dissolves  
Into dim eve's phantasmal loveliness.

So hath my wick gone out. My day of toil,  
Donato, it is done. Remaineth naught  
1635 Of the long road of frustrate dreams.

Shall dawn

Yet e'er revolve and up the painted east  
Shoot splendor? We have felt these eager years  
The dawning of a loveliness. But night  
1640 Draws close about us, and its touch is cold  
Upon my brow. Mine eyes are dark. My hand  
Bridles no longer to his wonted toil.  
And yet this heart will not be daunted! Thou,

## EVENING

Who hast the secret of the secret things  
1645 Divined in the organic principle  
Of character in beauty—thou, and I  
Who have groped with thee up toward Beauty's shrine  
And laid upon her altar all I am—  
We may not doubt the passing of this dark.  
1650 Too deep in the essential core of life  
Is beauty planted to be rooted out  
And cast upon the sateless fires of time.  
If branch be lopt, yet shall new shoots put forth,  
More manifold, more strengthened for the knife.  
1655 So we have grown with lopping, well thou know'st—  
Purged by adversity, and circumcised  
In spirit by affliction. The heart needs  
Some slashing for the perfect fruit.

These years

1660 That have lookt forward to a dawning sweet,  
Upon my tongue they have been bitter. Oh,  
I drained the cup of scorn in those old days  
When laughter and detraction followed me  
From fangful packs of snarlers, e'er and aye  
1665 Thro' damnèd years of effort to my end—  
My end that more was Florence's. That cup,  
So long since drunken to the nauseous dregs,  
Hath venomèd something at my inmost source

## BRUNELLESCHI

And sent me tainted down the hill, attaint  
1670 With pungence and acerbity where else  
Had run but sweetness and a madcap rill  
Of hurtless laughter. Tainted streams (what else?)  
Should flow from that outrageous prisonment  
Which gnarled my joints with agues, rheums, and blains,  
1675 And shrouded visioned eyes with fetid damps,  
Because, forsooth, assurance I had gained  
At last to make my point against the throng;  
Because, forsooth, no Builders' Guilder I,  
Tho' I was building what their Builders' Guild  
1680 Knew naught of nor could compass! Kindly milk  
Flows not from acrid foster-dugs, as figs  
Grow not on thistles. From my jailing gusht  
The spring of poisoned arrows into rime  
That seared thick skins as acid bites crude dross.  
1685 Ah, God forgive my rancor! I am he  
That is so crusht by wrong that lust bursts out  
For vengeance on the wronger—and the years,  
Upon my tongue they have been bitter.  
Nay,  
1690 Sweet wormwood, surely, since I've had thy faith  
To balm the sore that healeth last of all.  
And then, as core and substance of my life,  
I've had a task immortal. None may say



## EVENING

The life is bitter which hath held two bests  
1695 God to Himself hath appanaged—to love  
And to create; two bests that be but one,  
For at the last to love is to create.  
And to create? What is it but to love?  
In irised indistinctness all their lines  
1700 Swim mystical about the void of night,  
Merging in one thro' manifest diverse.  
Yea, I have loved the love of loneliness,  
Out-yearning worldwards in default of love  
To pour my manhood unto, all my man  
1705 Making for making. From my loins have leapt  
A progeny of vital creatures—thoughts  
That I have builded into loveliness,  
Which, once brought forth, have life intrinsical.  
Those children of the generative mind,  
1710 We know not whither they may take their way,  
Why live, where house, whom spouse, how procreate,  
When shuffle off; scarce launcht, self-masters. Would  
I might foreknow what time doth keep for them,  
Those offspring mine! Will they be fruitful seed? . . .  
1715 Apace the dusk advances into gloom.  
While we have watcht, adown the darkening slopes  
The day hath drainèd in a steady stream,

## BRUNELLESCHI

Withdrawing stealthily thro' cypress isles  
Uplift from forth its current. Now the flood  
1720 Of tardy-truant laggard light hath dropt  
And leveled, gathered in the serpentine  
Pearl-silver pool of Arno. Only there  
All radiant wanderers have rendezvous'd  
In glassy splendor. Out into the west  
1725 Light lies and languishes in liquid sleep.

O peachblow bloom of Florence! How thy heart  
Is mirrored in that lambence, which flows on  
Into unwot-of realms of the west's day,  
Revolving evermore! Thy soul hath burst  
1730 And burgeoned riotously on the brave  
Meander-margents of this westward stream,  
As 'twere the stem of time and thou the bloom  
That glads its nakedness. Well they thee called  
Who from the lavish garden of all tongues  
1735 Sought out the richest treasures, bee-wise,  
And culled the deathless honey of thy name.  
Thy soul is one with loveliness, thy name  
But one with that it nameth—gentle breath  
That wafts the sweetness of all blossoming  
1740 Aboon the dusty wayside.

Florentine!

## EVENING

How sing the heart-strings to the kindling warmth  
Of that flute-call's full music! Florentine!

'Tis thou and I, Donato, summoneth

- 1745 That blossom-soft, high clarion; and he  
Whose name—akin to thine, the giving-one—  
Is as a pearl of price, whose form is lost  
In dissolution in the noble grape  
Of "Florentine," so one leap o'er our lips  
1750 That living name and Dante's! Thence 'tis ours  
To be the fellows of immortal song,  
And to breathe in song's vital spirit. He,  
Who wove the garden-sweetness of all love  
Into one awesome triune universe  
1755 Of everlasting being, hath laid hand  
Upon our brows who spring from selfsame soil,  
And breathed into our mere mortality  
A breath immortal. Ours to live and die  
More greatly for his greatness, and more sweet  
1760 For that his fragrance hath embosomed sense  
In spirit largeness.

O thou Florentine!

Essential, adjunct, and epitome—

Stem, branch, and blossom—of our consciousness!

- 1765 Behold I now thy form upon the marge  
Of glamorous Arno, dreaming in the gloam?

## BRUNELLESCHI

Or is it she whom I have loved and served—  
She whom I have espoused—whom in my breast  
I wear, the cresting blossom of the world,  
1770 Time's fragrant childling, Florence? Be it thou  
Or she—thou, sweetest voice of deathlessness,  
Or she, whom thy sweet voice hath deathless made—  
One only soul I witness, evermore  
Inseparate. Snatch thou me up to thee,  
1775 Lift thou my spirit till't be one with thine  
And thou become the essence of my soul  
As of our city! Nay, I am but one  
With thee; I lipt thy measures with her milk  
Who bare me, and my self is saturate  
1780 With thy flood-spirit. In my work of works—  
Yonder up-standing quickened thing of clay—  
There throbs the life-blood of thy mightiness  
Somehow thro' me anew made manifest,  
From thee derivative, from thee who sprang  
1785 From the essential pregnancy Florence is  
Of power and sweetness. Thine and hers it is,  
That greatness I have fathered, now in night  
Still gleaming—luminous, of all the vale,  
Alone. From out the shrouded west some ray  
1790 Inscrutably still penetrates the dark  
And touches to long-lingering rose the Dome,

## EVENING

Informing, as a lamp its glow, that globe  
With warmth and lambency.

Oh, may it be

- 1795 A shining for the age to come, the flame  
Of a vast-regioned cresset, beaconing  
The minds that are my fellows yet-to-be  
Up darksome trails of travail to the height  
Where shrines, approachable, the Loveliness  
1800 Eternal. May my art contribute to,  
And bring down nearer to men's bungling hands,  
The art of the divine Artificer  
Wherein are all things as the light of day,  
Tho' darkly now we see as in a glass.  
1805 In sudden vision I behold the hour  
When art shall speak untrammelled and its words  
Shall arrow straight unto their goal, nor mist  
Of indirection but obscure the sense  
That lies behind their music. May my light,  
1810 Tho' be't but darkness, kindle on and on  
Into the night and usher in a morn  
When architecture shall be one with truth,  
Truth one with power, and power with constancy!

- Yet I bethink me in my heart of hearts  
1815 That truth is one with trial. I have set

## BRUNELLESCHI

My hand unto a task whereof not all  
I might fulfil and live, for so not man  
Were I, but He who made man in His image—  
Endowed with heavenward power to look above  
1820 But ever impotent to reach the height.  
For the allotted three score years and ten—  
Or such of them as answered—I've essayed  
To climb the summit of the centuries  
And orb their life in skiey stone! And now  
1825 From off my height unfinisht, unattained,  
I step into the starry ambience  
And mystery of evening skies. . . .

The Dome!

Behold! While we are musing, from the east  
1830 Hath swum the glamour of the lesser light  
And rimed its lamp with silver. I will take  
This radiance as an augury. Farewell!  
Let us go down, Donato, while the moon  
Plays Dian to Endymion, my Dome,  
1835 Kissing his sleep to dreams of loveliness  
That shall fulfil all longing!

Gift, thine arm. . . .







## NOTES

The full name of Brunelleschi (1377-1446) was Filippo di Ser Brunellesco Lapi. Brunelleschi, the name by which he is generally known, was the family name of his paternal grandmother.

LINE 4

Andrea di Lazzaro de' Cavalcanti (1412-1462), called, from his birthplace, Buggiano. He was a sculptor, a pupil of Donatello, and a close friend and protégé of Brunelleschi, who adopted him as a son.

LINE 24

'T is a beauty such, methinks,  
As none but he who made can utterly  
Delight in!

This is a reference to the following lines of Dante:

La bellezza ch' io vidi, si trasmoda  
Non pur di là da noi, ma certo io credo  
Che solo il Suo Fattor tutta la goda.

PARADISO: Canto XXX, lines 19-21.

Vasari tells us that Brunelleschi was a profound admirer of Dante, whose lines were ever on his lips. Several paraphrases are mentioned hereafter in these notes; but it is unnecessary, and indeed impossible, to identify all of the oblique allusions with which the text is sown. Brunelleschi gives full credit in his own words to the Florentine for the debt he, and all men, owe him. (See line 1762 *et seq.*)

## NOTES

### LINE 26

Arnolfo di Cambio, or di Lapo, (1232-1301) was the original architect of the cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore, which was founded in 1294. Arnolfo's father's name was Lapo, while Lapi was the family name of Brunelleschi, whose father was Ser Brunellesco di Lippo Lapi. This suggests a possible family relationship, all the more probable as Vasari tells us that the above Ser Brunellesco's grandfather was called Cambio. Lapi was, however, one of the most common of all Florentine names.

### LINE 55

There hath art

Touched the high term of beauty.

Brunelleschi has in mind the following lines of Dante:

Ma or convien che il mio seguir desista

Più dietro a sua bellezza, poetando,

Come all'ultimo suo ciascuno artista.

PARADISO: Canto XXX, lines 31-33.

### LINE 66

Timid that profile as it budded first

Arnolfo's original plan, which was modified after his death by his successors, included an octagonal dome of masonry, but much lower in profile than as executed later by Brunelleschi; and, furthermore, without the high drum or wall which lifts the dome proper some twenty-five feet above the top of the nave walls. The initial idea of the dome, therefore, we owe to Arnolfo; its freedom, majesty, and beauty, as well as the skill of its execution, to Brunelleschi.

### LINE 70

Those close *maestri*,

The general conduct of the construction of the cathedral was in the hands of the *maestri* (masters) of the *Opera del Duomo* (Board of Works of the Cathedral).

## NOTES

### LINE 162

Unfinisht yet and webbed with scantling gold

The main structure of the dome proper had been completed and the cathedral consecrated in 1436, ten years before Brunelleschi speaks; the lantern, of white marble, was begun seven years later, only three years before the architect's death, in 1446, and not finished till 1462, under Michelozzo.

### LINE 189

'Tis thou I would have make my monument;

The most interesting and valuable work of Andrea's which has come down to us is the circular wall-tablet in relief, to Brunelleschi's memory—admirable in execution, and most convincing as a portrait—which is placed high on the south wall of the cathedral just inside the southwest entrance.

### LINE 218

Thou know'st my model for Lorenzo's doors;

Lorenzo Ghiberti (1378-1455), the sculptor. The baptistry doors which were the subject of the competition in 1401 are those on the south side, corresponding in general character with the north doors already completed in 1336 by Andrea Pisano. On completion, after more than twenty years of labor, Ghiberti's doors were considered so fine that he was commissioned to execute the east doors as well; and it was these, even finer than the south doors, which Michelangelo declared worthy to be the gates of Paradise. These occupied Ghiberti more than a quarter of a century, and were his most important work.

### LINE 243

Giotto di Bondone (1276-1337), like Arnolfo and Brunelleschi, died before the completion of his great architectural

## NOTES

work. The tower, which he had begun in 1334, was completed in 1387. Yet "completed" is hardly the word to use, for Giotto's plan contemplated a high spire above the present cornice, which has never been executed, though the preparations for it are to be seen in their unfinished state under the supposedly temporary roof of the tower.

### LINE 325

Our two—Lorenzo's and my own—stood out

These two models in bronze, for a panel illustrating the Sacrifice of Isaac, are now hung side by side in the Bargello. There are considerable differences in merit as to composition, which are in Ghiberti's favor; but the most striking superiority of his bronze is in its spiritual quality. His Abraham is loth to strike, while Brunelleschi's goes vigorously to work, "hot to the deed, e'en odious" (see line 338).

### LINE 365

Donatello (Donato di Niccolò di Betto Bardi, 1386-1466), the great sculptor, was Brunelleschi's stanchest friend till death.

### LINE 368

Masaccio (Tommaso di Ser Giovanni Guidi da Castel San Giovanni, 1401-1428), who died at the early age of twenty-seven, had already worked a revolution in painting. His frescoes in the Brancacci chapel in the church of Santa Maria del Carmine are perhaps the finest of his works that remain to us. These and others were the models from which Michelangelo and Raphael, and in fact most of the later painters of the Renaissance, studied and formed their style.

### LINE 436

In desert purlieus of the shrunken town

At the end of the middle ages Rome had shrunk to a small

## NOTES

town. For three-quarters of a century before Brunelleschi's time, the city was not even the papal capital, the popes having established their court at Avignon, whence they returned to Rome the year of Brunelleschi's birth, 1377. The city then went through a period of more than two score years of schism and anarchy hardly less, perhaps more, disastrous than absolute desertion. The latter half of this period was the time of Brunelleschi's life there.

LINE 448

How 't was I lived,

Nothing is known, save in the most general way, of Brunelleschi's life in Rome; but in visiting the city it is a most interesting and stimulating experience to center one's mind, for a time, on what still exists there that was a part of Brunelleschi's own knowledge. It is astonishing how fully and clearly the character of the town, as he must have known it, may still be made to emerge.

LINE 469

Round me cattle browsed

The Forum, in mediæval and Renaissance times, was quite outside the inhabited part of the town, in the fields, and was known as "the cow-pasture" (*campo vaccino*).

LINE 476

giants, half their height

Awful up-turreting,

An allusion to Dante's lines:

Però che, come in su la cerchia tonda

Montereggion di torri si corona,

Così la proda che il pozzo circonda,

Torreggiavan di mezza la persona

Gli orribili giganti, cui minaccia

Giove del cielo ancora, quando tuona.

INFERNO: Canto XXXI, lines 40-45.

## NOTES

LINE 505

The Amphitheater's o'erwhelming sweep

The Amphitheater was far more complete in Brunelleschi's time than now. It was used all through the Renaissance as a quarry whence the materials were obtained for building the palaces which sprang up soon after the return of the papal court.

LINE 539

the ends of earth

Together all were gathered up within  
One fascicle of governance,

See Dante's lines:

Poi, presso al tempo che tutto il ciel volle  
Ridur lo mondo a suo modo sereno,  
Cesare, per voler di Roma, il tolle.

PARADISO: Canto VI, lines 55-57.

LINE 546

pagan priests

Did sanctify that temple to gods seven

The Pantheon was dedicated originally to Saturn, Jupiter, Mercury, Apollo, Diana, Venus and Mars.

LINE 709

the great refusal

See Dante's lines:

Vidi e conobbi l'ombra di colui  
Che fece per viltate il gran rifiuto.

INFERNO: Canto III, lines 59-60.

LINE 758

Reversing in perspective, vanisht down

Brunelleschi did much to perfect, if he did not actually invent, a method of perspective drawing, which until his time had been little used. In particular he taught his method to Masaccio, who profited greatly by it.

## NOTES

LINE 949

I had a crew of masons at the Dome  
Gathered in secret

Vasari says these masons were not Florentines, but Lombards.

LINE 978

The basket must be full,

Donatello had the amiable habit of keeping his money in an open basket which hung in his workroom, and any friend in need might help himself.

LINE 994

A lily whose frail petals turn aback

The lily figured on the coat of arms of Florence, whence the cathedral took its name of Santa Maria del Fiore (of the flower).

LINE 1006

The lady Gaddi's topknot?

This lady of the Gaddi family was only one of many who made Brunelleschi's life miserable by their pertinacious and conceited advocacy of designs by themselves, to replace the exquisite conception of the architect.

LINE 1047

My tiny cell in Santa Croce's garth

The Capella, or Chapel, of the Pazzi family, erected by Brunelleschi about 1430. The entrance is from the cloister.

LINE 1061

Well-meaning Frank

Francesco della Luna, one of Brunelleschi's pupils and assistants, to whom several of his designs were entrusted for execution. Among these was the Spedale degli Innocenti,

## NOTES

which is not infrequently called the first work of Renaissance architecture, having been begun about 1419. Francesco had it in charge after 1427, and made certain changes in the design during the course of construction which enraged Brunelleschi when he perceived them, though friendly relations continued.

### LINE 1086

The church of Santo Spirito, usually regarded as Brunelleschi's masterpiece, was begun in 1436, but not finished until 1482, thirty-six years after the architect's death, the work having been carried on under the direction of several successive superintendents.

### LINE 1089

The church of San Lorenzo, the reconstruction of which under Brunelleschi was begun in 1425, still lacked its dome at Brunelleschi's death.

### LINE 1098

Rankles that smooth-faced house of Cosimo,

Cosimo de' Medici (1389-1464) had a model prepared for his house by Brunelleschi, but rejected it on account of its size and splendor, preferring the more modest design of Michelozzo, though it is said he afterward regretted his choice.

### LINE 1103

Michelozzo (Bartolommeo di Gherardo di Michelozzo Michelozzi, 1396-1472), second only to Brunelleschi in architecture among the latter's contemporaries. Michelozzo was associated as architect with Donatello in many undertakings.

### LINE 1133

Luca Pitti wished to surpass his powerful rival, Cosimo de' Medici, in the splendor of his palace, with which desire Brunelleschi worked in full sympathy. Before completing his



## NOTES

house, however, Pitti lost his wealth and power; and the palace eventually became the property and official residence of the Medici family, thus justifying our architect's intuitions.

**LINE** 1153                               the Torse,  
Compact of vigorous antiquity,  
Dugged from Colonna's garden t'other day,

The fragment of antique Greek sculpture, now known as the Torso of the Vatican, was unearthed from the Colonna gardens in Rome not long before 1440. About this period Pope Eugene IV (1431-1447) requested Cosimo de' Medici to send an architect to him at Rome. Cosimo sent Brunelleschi, saying that such was his greatness that "he would undertake to move the world." The Pope was astonished at Brunelleschi's insignificant appearance. "So you can move the world?" "Verily, an you but furnish me a fulcrum for my lever!"

LINE 1261  
Whose wont you know was flabby white, like worms

The most convincing portrait of Cosimo, in which the pale, unwholesome look is emphasized, is part of Benozzo Gozzoli's mural paintings in the private chapel of the Medici (now the Riccardi) Palace.

LINE 1482            as God looks down upon His world,  
The handiwork He loves so well His eye  
Parts never from it—

**The reference is to the following passage from Dante:**

E lì comincia a vagheggiar nell' arte  
Di quel Maestro che dentro a sè l' ama  
Tanto, che mai da lei l' occhio non parte.

**PARADISO: Canto X, lines 10-12.**

## NOTES

LINE 1488

The church of San Miniato al Monte, built in the eleventh century, is one of the finest examples of the Romanesque, or, one might say, early Christian, basilica type north of Rome.

LINE 1498

when Cosimo

Gave me to build anew the rotting fane  
Of San Lorenzo.

Strictly speaking, it was Giovanni de' Medici, Cosimo's father, who had originally set Brunelleschi to work at San Lorenzo, to rebuild the sacristy. On the death of Giovanni, however, in 1429, Cosimo (in conjunction with several other donors) continued and extended the employment to include the entire reconstruction of the church. Both San Lorenzo and Santo Spirito are strongly reminiscent of the basilica type of church.

LINE 1525

The church of Santa Sabina was built about 425, and is, of all the early Christian basilicas, the least changed from its original character. Its ancient doors still retain their primitive carvings, among which is what is reputed to be the oldest extant crucifixion.

LINE 1537

"Take thou a bit of wood

And fashion me that Agony!"

When Donatello was a boy he carved a crucifix of wood which now hangs in Santa Croce. Brunelleschi, on seeing it, exclaimed that he had put a clown on the cross. Deeply chagrined, Donatello cried, "Take wood and carve one for yourself, then!" Brunelleschi accepted the challenge, and presently asked Donatello in to see his crucifix, having meanwhile kept his work a secret. Donatello was completely overcome with

## NOTES

the beauty of his friend's achievement, which is now in San Lorenzo.

**LINE 1685**                                 **I am he**  
That is so crusht by wrong that lust bursts out  
For vengeance on the wronger—

**See Dante's lines:**

Ed è chi per ingiuria par ch' adonti  
Si, che si fa della vendetta ghiotto;  
E tal convien che il male altrui impronti.

**PURGATORIO: Canto XVII, lines 121-123.**

**LINE 1690**

**Sweet wormwood,**

**See Dante's words:**

## A ber lo dolce assenzio de' martiri

**PURGATORIO: Canto XXIII, line 86.**

**LINE 1691**

**To balm the sore that healeth last of all.**

**See Dante's lines:**

E questo modo credo che lor basti  
Per tutto il tempo che il foco gli abbrucia:  
Con tal cura convien, con cotai pasti  
Che la piaga dassezzo si ricucia.

**PURGATORIO: Canto XXV, lines 136-139.**

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